



THE JOY OF LEARNING

HEADMASTER'S NEWSLETTER

1 July 2014

Dear Parents

I have just welcomed back 100 kids from our Preparatory School who arrived back this morning after their winter sports tour of the Eastern Cape. There was a buzz as the buses arrived and I have no doubt that these young men and women have done us proud. Touring is a wonderful experience for kids: they learn some independence and resilience and always have a wonderfully fulfilling time with friends. It is great to have all these boys and girls back safe and sound and we wish you and them a wonderful holiday break.

The College pupils have been transfixed with the writing of the examinations for the last two weeks and the Matrics have been writing in the quiet confines of the Catholic Church Hall in town. This has alleviated the stress on our facilities at our academic campus and I am hoping that the peace and quiet of this setting facilitated a good examination environment.

This has been a short term but one filled with much activity: we enjoyed our College musical production, *The Broadway Blue*; we watched our College rugby side lose narrowly in the last 30 seconds of the game to Knysna High: 15-14; we saw our 1st XI hockey side fight back courageously to beat Glenwood House, 3-2 in their derby day; and I thoroughly enjoyed seeing the engineering design of a number of bridges in the 'Bridge Building competition' in which our School was placed third in the Eastern Cape. A number of our Prep School students represented us at the Young Round Square Conference in Johannesburg and I thoroughly enjoyed their report back when they returned. We spoilt our moms at the annual Mothers' Day events and we hosted 16 schools at the Oakhill Hockey Festival held on our new Astroturf. We also hosted Emma Sadleir, who spoke to our community about the ills of social media and our dads pulled some muscles in the annual Fathers' Day soccer event!

I have recently spent three days in Johannesburg visiting a variety of schools, and I have to admit that I was relieved to fly back to Knysna, with a number of other commuting parents, to enjoy the closing week in our busy, yet vibrant, and energetic school. The young men and women of Oakhill continue to amaze me with their resilience and creativity and, after six years at the helm of this great school, I can honestly say that I enjoy every moment.

Oakhill Sports Campus opening

The Oakhill Sports Campus will be officially opened on **2 August 2014** and I would encourage all parents, children and Oakhill community members to join us in celebrating this magnificent moment in our history. There will be a variety of activities on the day to suit all ages and you will find your invitation for this event in your end-of-term pack. Please diarise the date and join us in the celebrations.

Traffic at Oakhill

We are all acutely aware of the congestion at drop off and pick up times on our campus and I am pleased to announce that we are completing the construction of a new parking area which will alleviate the congestion. This area will consist of about 60 parking places and we will be asking all staff to park on the top field, where this area has been created. This will create as many parking places in the front-of-school parking areas and we would ask that you make use of any parking below which is available in these areas from the beginning of Term 3.

School Clothing Shop

Please take note that our School Clothing Shop is migrating online for your convenience. You will be able to order all your school uniform online from the beginning of next term. Please visit our website www.oakhillschool.co.za for details from Term 3.



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Establishing a Boarding House at Oakhill School

We recently sent out two letters pertaining to the establishment of a boarding facility at Oakhill. Although there is significant interest we have unfortunately decided to postpone the opening of this facility for a number of reasons. Thank you for taking the time to respond to the survey.

Staffing

Unfortunately we have two staff members in our Preparatory School departing at the end of Term 2 and we have had a number of farewells for **Penny Lamb** and **Jane Horn** who have both decided to teach abroad. Both Penny and Jane's daughters matriculated at Oakhill and they are currently at tertiary institutions around the country, and this is an opportune time for both of them to embark on adventure.

Penny has taught at Oakhill for 9 years and Jane has been teaching here in various capacities for the last 12 years. Both are experienced, empathetic, wise educators and although we are sad to see them leave we are also excited for them as they embark on this new journey.

Deborah MacDonald, who has a Bachelor Degree as well as a Higher Diploma in Education, will be replacing Penny in Grade 1 and **Susan Minnaar**, who has a Bachelor of the Arts in Psychology and English as well as a Post Graduate Certificate in Education will be replacing Jane in Grade 4. We are fortunate to have acquired the services of two experienced educators and we look forward to welcoming them into our community next term.

We also bid farewell to **Kat Forster**, who filled in for **Loami Koekemoer** while she was on maternity leave. It was wonderful to welcome Kat back onto the teaching staff, albeit only for a term, as she was one of the teachers who started teaching at Oakhill in its founding years two decades ago. We thank her for her compassion and wisdom whilst teaching the Grade 3's.

We also welcome back **Hanette Bower**, our Life Sciences Teacher in the College, after maternity leave. **Schonrad Jordaan** also joins us in a part-time position to teach Afrikaans in the College from Term 3.

Examinations

We have always attempted to be as flexible as possible when it comes to making exceptions for young men and women during exam time but I am afraid that this is becoming more and more difficult. We allowed a number of exceptions for postponing the writing of an examination for provincial sporting events and bereavement this term but we are going to have to reconsider our processes in the future.

As a part of the exam timetable a statement will be made stating that exams will be written at the scheduled time without exceptions.

Grades 7 – 11:

The usual procedure of requesting permission to miss an exam must be made, in writing, to Mr Kidwell. A formal answer, in writing, will be communicated to the family and to the Academic office. If permission is granted, teachers may organise that the student writes the exam in the following term as a worksheet to gain the experience of spending the time on the paper. However, formalised exam sessions will not be provided for.

If a student misses an examination as a result of illness, they will need to provide a doctor's certificate and will be marked absent. The above procedure will then apply.

*From now on any student missing an exam for any reason whatsoever, and permission is **not** granted by the Head of the School, they will receive '0' for the examination.*



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Grade 12:

June and Preliminary Examinations: All IEB regulations to be stringently applied. Because the June and Prelim exams do form a part of the portfolio, any student who is absent for an exam will have to produce a doctor's certificate and then will be allowed to catch up the exam paper.

Special concessions cannot be accommodated in the preliminary examinations under any circumstances.

Final Examinations: As per IEB instructions. Absence from an examination: A doctor's certificate will have to be supplied and then if there is a supplementary exam in a subject, the candidate will be allowed to sit that exam. Alternatively, the candidate will have to wait and write the exam in the following November.

We obviously do not want to be obstructive with regard exceptions to the rule but all parents need to be aware that we have to follow stringent guidelines to ensure that we keep to our high standards of academic administration. Your support in this regard will be appreciated.

Yearbook - 2013

Our annual yearbook will be complete at the start of Term 3. It is a wonderful celebration of our 21st Birthday and I apologise for the delay in the publishing of this exciting edition. I would like to thank our recently appointed Graphic Designer, Melanie Vogt, for picking up this project mid-stride and for ensuring the success of this particular publication. I would also like to, once again, thank Brenda McKechnie for all she has done in recent years in helping us ensure success in the production of this important document. Enjoy the diversity of the magazine when it arrives!

Finally...

I would like to thank the entire community for your support at sporting functions, dramatic and musical productions and special days like the Father's Day soccer. Our school is in a wonderfully happy place midway through this year and we appreciate all you do for your kids as well as for the Oakhill community. We continue to become more competitive in the sporting arena, and more rigorous on the academic front and, as we grow in stature, we need to all remind ourselves of the magic that has brought us this far. This is a happy place, but this does not mean that we always get it right, and I would encourage you to communicate openly with teachers and administrators should you feel that there is an issue that needs attention.

Lastly, I celebrate my daughter's 10th birthday today and am reminded that the last decade has flown past in the blink of an eye – she was only 9 yesterday! The journey of raising kids is rigorous and unbelievably fulfilling, so enjoy the break with your children. Listen to them but don't indulge them, be honest with them but remember that they are on a journey of the joy of learning. Engage with them, enjoy the moments and commit to being present in every moment! And don't forget to laugh, have fun and return safely for the penultimate term of the year.

Kind regards

Shane Kidwell
HEADMASTER